

Report from the VPI Workgroup

Values Driving VPI Policy and Budget Decisions:

High quality program tied to improved school readiness at kindergarten entry

Mixed delivery system supporting public and private programs

Targeted to at-risk four year-old students

Current funding level does not support true educational costs in most communities

Current policies create challenges for localities' planning needs

Possible Recommendations:

- 1. Restore funding for administrative oversight and programmatic site visits-** In 2012? administrative funding for oversight and site visits was eliminated. Restoring the funding would enable the department to better meet local needs. It would also meet one of the currently unmet NIEER quality standards for state preschool systems.
 - Need recommendation to outline goals of oversight and site visits; will determine the skills/background of entity conducting visits.
 - Meeting program standards
 - Provide technical assistance- improve quality, expand access through partnerships, blend/braid
 - Monitor/reconcile use of funds
- 2. Leverage community programs as partners in a mixed delivery system.** Policies should encourage partnership with community providers (private, non-profit, faith based) while maintaining quality standards.

Possible recommendations:

 - VDOE issues guidance on operating policies for public/private partnerships (need resources to do so?)
 - Create a formal mechanism for localities to share best practices and lessons learned (like the recent VDOE webinar)
 - Review other concepts of "Considerations for VPI Public/Private Partnerships"
- 3. Reconsider VPI funding, formula and eligibility.** The current VPI funding formula is a complex formula that factors in the Local Composite Index, projected kindergarten enrollment, free lunch participation by school division, and Head Start Enrollment to determine each school division's allocation and state funding level. In recent years allocations have fluctuated based on changes to the formula calculation. Per pupil funding has remained flat and is one of few "direct aid for education" related funded streams not subject to rebenchmarking.

Possible recommendations:

 - Increase the per pupil rate by tying to inflation or rebenchmarking process
 - Increase the percentage of in-kind contributions that constitute local match from 25% of local match

- Identify other factors to determine at-risk population in community that factor in: i) children under 6 are more likely to live in economically disadvantaged families than the overall child population and ii) the community eligibility provision for the school lunch program will not allow VA to track the percent of students eligible for free lunch in some communities.
- Affirm unique cap on 50% local match

4. Fund growth in participation by classroom- Consider the start up costs for a new classroom including developmentally appropriate furnishings and materials. Consider those costs, and incentives to increase participation when adding a whole classroom, rather than individual student slots.

Possible recommendations:

- VDOE is considering offering guidance for using any allocated but unspent funds for this purpose. – Support VDOE

5. Review eligibility criteria to develop uniform criteria reflective of identifying children at-risk for success in school

Possible recommendations:

- Research shows that economically disadvantaged young children (below 200% of poverty) are less likely to participate in preschool and most at-risk of not being prepared for school.
- Experience of administrators and kindergarten teachers identify English Language Learners, children experiencing family stress (homelessness, incarceration, military deployment, etc.) and children with any developmental delays as children that can benefit most from a preschool experience.
- Does data from the PALS-K identify any target groups at-risk of not being ready?
- CCCS VPI Workgroup to work with the Joint Subcommittee as they study this issue

6. Revisit the practice of calculating a non-participation rate, and factoring that rate into the appropriation level- As participation in VPI steadily increases each year, the practice of using a 25% nonparticipation rate will not adequately fund growth.

- Eliminate the practice? Phase out?

7. Support VPI+ implementation, and review policy considerations from implementation

Possible recommendations:

- The Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success should receive annual progress reports on VPI+ implementation including evaluation findings. Evaluation findings should be review for impact on VPI policy and system changes.